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PRESS STATEMENT

The Honorable Edward P. Boland, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, issued the following statement concerning charges by President Reagan that U.S. intelligence was nearly destroyed during the Carter Administration:



Such a charge is both unfair and untrue. The Carter Administration made some CIA personnel cuts in 1977 - acting on recommendations developed during President Ford's Administration. These cuts were recommended as part of the drawdown in military and intelligence personnel that began in the Nixon Administration after the end of the war in Vietnam. In any case, CIA personnel were reduced principally at headquarters, not in the field.

Throughout the Carter years, intelligence collection about terrorism received higher and higher priorities. Other requirements were added as well. The numbers of CIA clandestine collection personnel were increased. So, too, were analytical personnel. That trend of collection personnel increases continued during the Reagan Administration.

CIA officials testified consistently before the Committee that the numbers of collection personnel in the budget were adequate to meet the requirements levied upon them. As those requirements increased, so, too, did requests for intelligence personnel.

A popular myth about intelligence - which began before President Carter took office - has been that the intelligence community had been cut drastically and needed to be rebuilt. What happened is that some functions and personnel were not needed after Vietnam. Others were transferred to the Defense Department. What happened during the Carter and Reagan years is that new requirements - for economic intelligence, drug trafficking intelligence, terrorist intelligence, third world military intelligence, etc. - were added. As a result, new personnel and larger budgets were requested for the intelligence community. Congress by and large supported those requests.

Collecting intelligence on terrorism is among the most difficult of intelligence tasks. Terrorist groups are often small, constantly on guard against surveillance and may only come together for one attack. Yet, U.S. intelligence has had some significant successes against terrorist groups, and particularly state-sponsored terrorism.

If there are shortcomings on terrorism, however, they are shortcomings of this Administration, which has had four years to solve any problems. There was no intelligence failure in Beirut, and the President's suggestion that there was is the real blow to U.S. intelligence.